

# Fact Sheet:

## Understanding Voice Difficulties

Your voice is made when air from your lungs passes through your vocal cords (voice box) and causes them to vibrate.

### Signs of voice difficulties

Changes in our voice can occur due to illness, voice overuse, ageing, reflux, stress, or underlying medical conditions (e.g. stroke, COPD, Parkinson's disease). While some changes are temporary, persistent or worsening voice difficulties should be assessed by a speech pathologist or medical professional.

Some signs of voice difficulties include:

- Hoarse, rough, or raspy voice quality.
- Your voice gets tired easily.
- Strain or increased effort when talking.
- Pain or discomfort when talking.
- Breathy, weak or quiet voice.
- Voice breaks, or a voice that comes and goes.
- Feeling the need to frequently cough or throat clear.

### How can a speech pathologist help?

A speech pathologist can:

- Assess how your voice is working.
- Provide exercises to use your voice more efficiently.

- Provide strategies and exercises to improve voice quality.
- Provide strategies to support voice health.

### What can you do at home to help your voice?

- Avoiding yelling, screaming or overuse of your voice.
- Stay hydrated – drink approximately 8 cups of water throughout the day.
- Practice vocal rest – rest your voice throughout the day.
- Reduce irritants that can dry out vocal cords (e.g. alcohol, caffeine, smoke, chemicals).
- Reduce coughing and throat clearing.

### When should you seek support?

If you notice any of the above signs, your voice difficulties have lasted longer than 2-3 weeks, or your voice difficulties are impacting your daily life or work, it is best to seek guidance from a speech pathologist.

**For more information** contact Benalla Health on (03) 5761 4500 to speak to a speech pathologist.